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AFA Cheyenne
LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES M. KOWALSKI
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General Alston thank you for that kind introduction. Irene thank you for hosting this great event. It is a pleasure to celebrate our Air Force's birthday with AFA Cheyenne, citizens who understand and value the contribution of a strong and disciplined military to ensuring peace. This is a community that has supported FE Warren Air Force Base since it was Fort DA Russell. With that support, the units stationed here excelled at their missions—for example, the 90th Missile Wing has brought back to Cheyenne the General Blanchard Trophy as the Best ICBM Missile Wing in the Air Force five times, most recently in 2010. This dedication is also demonstrated by the assistance members of AFA Cheyenne provide, to include the “Milk Can Meals” for AF Thunderbird enlisted members during Cheyenne Frontier days, the consistent sponsorship of FE Warren awards banquets, and the Congressional Breakfasts hosted during the annual AFA convention in DC... It is an honor to join you here, well away from DC, to share with you some thoughts about the geo-political challenges we face, and how



the airmen of AF Global Strike Command are prepared to help our nation maintain peace in world characterized by accelerating change.

In the last few weeks I've had two engagements with our veterans from WWII and the Cold War. I escorted an Honor Flight in DC through the memorials—starting with WWII and ending at Arlington National cemetery. While at the WWII memorial I saw again a quote from Gen George Marshall: “We are determined that before the sun sets on this terrible struggle, Our Flag will be recognized throughout the World as a symbol of Freedom on the one hand and of overwhelming force on the other.”

A week later I spoke to the reunion of the 98th Bomb Group, mostly ex-Strategic Air Command aviators but this reunion highlighted their Bomb Group's role in the Ploesti raid of WWII—178 B-24s, low level into the teeth of tough Nazi air defenses...53 aircraft lost and 310 airmen were killed. This raid resulted in the most medals of honor ever awarded for a single air action—five...three posthumous.



There were 15 of the Ploesti Raiders at the dinner that night, and it was humbling to be with them and hear some of their stories. It reminded me that they were the airmen who established our flag as symbol of freedom, and they were also the airmen that created Strategic Air Command, the command that from 1946 to 1992 was US global power projection—the symbol of overwhelming force—successfully deterring the Soviet Union and assuring allies through all of the Cold War. I tell you this because that is a proud Air Force heritage—our legacy of valor, discipline, and innovation—an unbroken line from the airmen of WWII to the airmen who are in this audience tonight.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, we found ourselves the last superpower standing, leaders of a uni-polar world where capitalist democracy seemed inevitably ascendant. In that atmosphere, the number of democratic nations increased by half, and one popular non-fiction book was titled “The End of History.” The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, keepers of the doomsday clock, reset the minute hand from 6 minutes until midnight to 17 minutes until midnight.



Now if we look back at the two decades since 1991 we can find a lot to talk about, and argue about. The negatives include the 9/11 attacks, two wars in South West Asia, and an economy that stumbled, then stalled. But there were also positives; and Harvard professor Steven Pinker in his book *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, points out what may be the most significant. Despite what you may think from watching television, we are now living in the most peaceful time in the existence of our species. We may be able to trace what he calls this “long age of peace” to increasing economic and cultural globalization and integration of our world, but I believe some share of the credit must also go to the airmen who earned that peace in WWII; airmen who then sustained the balance of power during the Cold War, frustrating Soviet aggression; airmen who paved the way for the benign dominance of the United States the last 20 years.

However, there are some trends we have to watch if we are to remain in this long age of peace. The first is the impact of moving from a world dominated by the US to a multi-polar world with many peers and competitors. The decline of Japan and the economic and military rise of



China and India are the most obvious examples of the changing balances between states. The growth of these two nations is positive—certainly what we don't want are poorly governed countries with Billion-plus citizens living in abject poverty. The world needs China and India to be stable and successful.

A second trend is the rise of non-state actors who have the tools to develop and harness political power, and access to the tools of destruction that in the past were the monopoly of nation-states. The physical and economic damage inflicted by Al-Qeda in 2001 is small compared to what they could do today if they were to regain the resources and freedom of action they had a decade ago.

A third trend is the world's increasing reliance on globalized logistics and infrastructure, enabled through information technology. While this has dramatically improved productivity the last two decades, it has also created a system vulnerable to both mischief, and direct attack. The consequences of cyber attacks could quickly exceed inconvenience, and threaten the energy and food supplies of advanced societies.

Now these trends are developing in the context of several potential geopolitical flashpoints. I'm not going to try to predict the future here—



SecDef Gates once said “we have a perfect record of predicting the future, we never get it right.” Instead, let me illustrate with two potential flashpoints.

First is the increasing competition for resources as the global population approaches 7 Billion people. We can expect regional tensions over the control of water, rare earth metals, and energy sources. One example of this is China’s aggressive tone and occasional use of force in the South China Sea. Another is Turkish control over the flow of water into the Tigris and Euphrates rivers for Iraq and Syria.

A second flashpoint could be any of the states subject to the so-called Arab Spring. Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya are all in transition governments and there is clear potential for the fall of the governments of Yemen and Syria. While we hope that stable governments, governments responsive to their citizens, emerge from the current turmoil, it may be just as probable that power vacuums in this region attract the most ruthless of extremists and lead to further instability. So while the post-WWII era led to a long period of peace, we should be prepared for a complex multi-polar world, a world that looks more like pre-WWI Europe.



While we all hope for peaceful resolution of global problems, hope is not a strategy.

A world that is complex and dynamic is a world where the US strategic forces can be a broad stabilizing force. That is a world where our forces can do what they have done every day for the last 64 years—provide peace through strength.

The ultimate expression of our military power, of our strategic influence, is our nuclear force. No force creates in the mind of potential adversaries the uncertainty needed to deter conventional conflict, or the fear needed to deter nuclear conflict. 20th Air Force, the 90th Missile Wing, and the city of Cheyenne are at the heart of this mission.

Put simply, nuclear deterrence provides the foundational credibility for our conventional military power and gives national leadership a full range of options when dealing with a crisis.



With the major nuclear powers our forces provide the framework for strategic stability through force structure parity and continued dialogue, mil-to-mil engagements, and transparency between nations. Our nuclear forces are also one dimension of our security structure for deterring regional threats, important in a security environment populated with both nuclear threats and proliferators of nuclear and missile technologies.

Finally, our nuclear forces extend deterrence to our friends and allies. This serves our non-proliferation goals by showing that our allies' security interests can be protected without having their own nuclear arsenals. But extended deterrence is fragile—both our capability and our will have to be unimpeachable.

To remain confident in our ability to execute nuclear deterrence now and into the future, we face three tasks. The first is to sustain and enhance the current force while modernizing for the future. The Air Force has been balancing current needs against future requirements since 1947 and we've seen the cycles of funding as support has waxed and waned. But unlike previous reductions, the Air Force is not



stepping away from any missions, in fact our mission set and security challenges continue to grow. So as we advocate for funding our current force, we have to also advocate for the resources needed to modernize. Secretary Panetta recently testified that “we have got to...fully fund the modernization effort with regards to the nuclear arena...we have always been at the cutting edge of technology and we have to stay there...it’s tremendously short-sighted to reduce the funds that are absolutely essential for modernization”. The heart of our modernization is the family of long range strike systems—a new penetrating bomber, a new stand-off nuclear cruise missile, a conventional prompt global strike system, and the ground-based Strategic Deterrent missile to replace the Minuteman III. But new weapon systems aren’t enough. We must also pursue modernization of our nuclear command and control, and help advocate for revitalization of our nuclear infrastructure within the Department of Energy.

A second task is to successfully advocate for retaining the nuclear Triad. As we implement New START and reduce the number of deployed warheads, the importance of the triad increases. With fewer



weapons on fewer delivery vehicles, the risk of technical problems or operational vulnerabilities may place an unsustainable burden on the remaining force. For example, what if we discover a problem with a specific missile, delivery vehicle, or warhead that affects half, or more, of our deterrent force? Combine that with the possibility of geo-political surprise or an operational vulnerability, and risk of a monad or dyad becomes unacceptable. Our triad is not redundant—it is complementary; it provides options and flexibility against an uncertain future, it complicates adversary offensive and defensive plans, and it provides national leadership options to control escalation in a crisis. Our ICBMs are the most responsive and cost effective alert force, they have the strongest command and control, and they are dispersed and hardened--vulnerable only to direct nuclear attack. Our bombers are effective across a range of conventional missions, they have multiple load-out, deployment and dispersal options; and under New START counting rules, provide a hedge against technical or geo-political surprise. These two legs of the Triad underpin the other elements of national power and provide global strategic stability for less than 1% of the DoD budget...frankly, I think that's a bargain.



Under Secretary of the Air Force Conaton summed up what we do when she said: “because we live in a world where nuclear weapons exist, and we face enemies that seek to do us great harm, our missileers stand constant alert. Our bombers remain prepared to generate. Our nuclear security forces continually patrol. And our maintainers and force support personnel ensure our weapons systems and operators are always at the ready.”

By sustaining a world where America can continue to deter and assure, can we also extend this long age of peace, and in the words of President Obama: “deter any adversary and guarantee that defense to our allies.”

Or in the words of Gen Marshall—we remain a symbol of freedom on one hand, and overwhelming force on the other.

Once again, many thanks for inviting me to be with you today. It has been my privilege to join you here tonight.